

Get connected on your television



BARRY JENSEN

If you want to travel the electronic World Wide Web from your easy chair, Philips Magnavox makes a box for you. By hooking up their box, you can wander the popular World Wide Web and send and receive electronic mail (e-mail) on your plain old television set.

You must connect the box with your VCR (or TV set), a keyboard and your telephone line. (You can use a separate telephone line or your existing phone line.) The box comes with a hand-held remote control that is good for reading mail or going to your favorite web site. Hooking up is easy, easier than resetting those digital clocks that are always blinking after a power failure.

"This is designed for casual use by adults or casual or serious use by children," said Tom Vandermark of Circuit City. It is a fine way to send electronic letters to and from your kids in college or a friend or relative. These units are available at most electronic appliance stores. ABC Warehouse was expecting to

have its connection running last week.

The whole thing is simple enough for a child to use. Because some people have expressed concern about their children, the manufacturers provide a method for you to restrict access to certain web sites and regulate e-mail.

If you want to type e-mail or direct your TV to a web site you haven't looked at before, you must also have a keyboard. Philips Magnavox sells one for \$70 that will do the trick. The keyboard is wireless, so it communicates across an unobstructed path from the keyboard to the box, which can be near your TV. The keyboard is powered by a pair of triple A batteries. Imagine cuddling under a comforter in front of your TV this winter and wandering the World Wide Web, with just your hands exposed when you want to type a message.

The box costs \$330, the infrared keyboard costs \$70. The phone line costs nothing, if you use your existing telephone line. If you get a phone call while you are wandering around the World Wide Web, you will see a special display on the screen. You can then answer your telephone as normal.

In order to wander the World Wide Web, you must be connected to it. Webby

always provides the connection. This costs \$20 a month for as many hours as you want to be connected.

To get started, you turn on the TV, grab the remote control and push one button. This makes the necessary telephone call to the company that provides your connection to the World Wide Web and e-mail service. You are unaware of the phone call: You don't hear a dial tone and all you see is a bar in the corner of the screen telling you it is connecting.

Once you are connected, you have several choices, but the choice that most people will make is to travel the World Wide Web or check your e-mail.

The data comes to your TV screen as fast as it comes to a computer screen.

For the technical minded, the box has a built-in 33.6 modem. This is just about as fast as most computer users would be able to buy.

If you want to wander the whole Internet, this is NOT the tool. It does not handle such things as news groups, FTP, IRC or other features of the Internet. Likewise, you can not obtain computer programs from over the Internet because this is NOT a computer and does not have off-line memory.

Among the World Wide Web sites you might want to visit is the Magnavox home page: <http://www.magnavox.com>. Another is ours, <http://www.oonline.com>

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